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Williams College owes its name and its origin to an educational bequest of Colonel Ephraim Williams (who was killed in the battle at Lake George in 1755) for the purpose of founding "a Free School" in Williamstown. The Free School was chartered in 1785 and opened October 20, 1791, with the Rev. Ebenezer Fitch as preceptor. On June 22, 1793, by an act of legislature, Williams College was established and to it the property of the Free School was transferred.

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